

EMILE ZOLA, NOVELIST AND REFORMER  
119

after its establishment by Edmond Tarbe". Then, too, "La Tribune," a weekly journal for which he wrote regularly, was certainly most democratic, if rather eccentric in some of its views.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, a few years after the invasion and revolution, Edmond de Goncourt, lunching one day with Princess Mathilda Bonaparte, did not hesitate to declare that the Empire might have secured Zola's services had it chosen. "He was penniless, he had a mother and a wife to keep. At the outset he had no public opinions. You could have had him on your side like many others, had you chosen. He could only find democratic newspapers to take his copy. Living among all those folk, he became a democrat. It was quite natural." And Goncourt added that the Princess Mathilde had disarmed many hatreds and angers by her friendship, graciousness, and attentions, winning over such men as himself, his brother, and Flaubert to the Empire which, otherwise, they also would have attacked.<sup>2</sup>

Those allegations, so far as they concern Zola, cannot be left unanswered. The Goncourts' "Journal" shows that the brothers, with all their gifts, were not men of the highest principles; and it is evident that they often judged others by their own standard. As a matter of

fact                      there                      is  
no shred of evidence that Zola would ever  
have                      sold                      him-  
self to the Empire. At the time of that  
*regime*, as subse-

1 This was perhaps due to the circumstance that Glais-Bizoin, the *enfant terrible* of the Republican opposition in the Corps Législatif, played the chief part in the directorship of the paper, the latter's better features being imparted to it by his co-editor, the scholarly Eugene Pelletan. It was run chiefly in view of the 1869 elections and Zola subsequently remarked that, excepting himself and the office boy every member of its staff was a parliamentary candidate.

2 "Journal des Gtoncourt," vol. T» P- 150 (November 13, 1874).